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Cherokee Royalties: The Impact of Indian Tourism on the Eastern Band Cherokee Identity

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CHEROKEE ROYALTIES

The Impact of Indian Tourism on the Eastern Band Cherokee Identity

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the American Studies Program

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Annette Bird Saunooke

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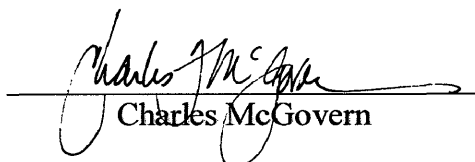
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Annette Bird Saunooke

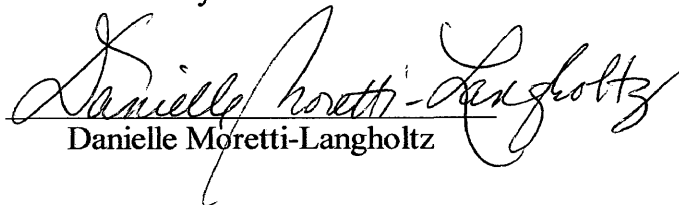
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Charles McGovern



Grey Gundaker



Danielle Moretti-Langholtz

For my family and the People of Cherokee, North Carolina for their continued support.

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ABSTRACT

How does a people appropriate, for economic purposes, the imagery of another culture, commodify it and yet attempt to maintain their own cultural autonomy? In this paper, I will explain not only the political and social issues surrounding the emergence of Cherokee Tourism on the Qualla Boundary but also the implications of this “Plains Indians” imagery as it relates to Cherokee Identity politics of this decade.

Cherokee tourism is a search for a national narrative, and one that arises particularly in times of American economic struggle or questions of citizenship. Therefore, Cherokee *American* citizenship has depended greatly on economic citizenship. Tourism, as a method of this form of citizenship, has intensified social divisions in Cherokee as Cherokee becomes a classed and raced society.

This study will follow Cherokee from its initial interactions with the United States government through the tribal elections of 2003. This timeline provides a picture of Cherokee people living in poverty to the recent economic upturn resulting from Harrah’s Cherokee Casino.

CHEROKEE ROYALTIES

INTRODUCTION

Leaving home for college is an exciting, if not nerve-racking, time in any young person's life. As the time approached for me, I was excited to leave the South, leave my small hometown and see what the Northeast had to offer. Amid the stack of form letters I had received from my future alma mater, one stands out. According to the letter, I had been personally invited to arrive at school a week early to participate in an orientation program called, "Cultural Connections." Apparently, the college had organized this program to make the transition to college life easier for minority students who would begin their studies in the fall. Great idea, but why had I received the letter? I had never considered myself in need of any special training on how to navigate through various cultures, especially a mostly WASP culture that the college was infamous for conveying. Needless to say, I did not attend. I have regretted that decision. It would be very early on in my freshman year that I realized being American Indian was unusual, rare, even unacceptable to many of the people I would encounter throughout my education. Yet, having grown up in Cherokee, North Carolina, on the Qualla Boundary (commonly referred to as the Eastern Band Cherokee Indian reservation), I was never isolated from "white" culture nor Indian culture. They had always existed side by side for me, even within my own body. But it was the lack of knowledge of Native America in the mainstream culture, and especially academia, that came to influence my studies and compel me to voice the concerns of Indian Country as well as my own community. I

may not have been culturally "unconnected" as the invitation had assumed, but I do feel a continuous need to explain the pathways of connectivity between Indian Country and the greater United States. How can these very different worlds exist within each others' borders and share very similar experiences? How do these worlds define each other? Tourism, the business of my family for generations, has provided some answers to these questions and it is this industry that I choose to focus on in this paper.

I approach this topic as an enrolled member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, having lived in Cherokee, North Carolina my entire life. It is my home and the Cherokee people are my community. However, when I travel, the mention of "Cherokee" evolves into a variety of discussion topics with strangers. The word "Cherokee" carries with it a description of a place (in North Carolina), a tribal group, a language, and an assortment of opinions about what it means to be Cherokee. In this paper I will use "Cherokee" to represent all of these definitions, trying to clarify its usage when possible. When I use "Cherokee," I will always be referring to the Eastern Band unless otherwise noted.

It should be understood from the beginning that there are two federally recognized bands of Cherokees. As a result of forced removal in the 1930s, the Cherokees were split into the Eastern and Western Bands. The Eastern Band (the topic of this paper) is located in the towns of Cherokee and Snowbird, North Carolina. However, members live all over the world and this band is comprised of approximately 13,000 members worldwide. The Western Band is located in Tahlequah, Oklahoma and has a much larger enrollment.¹ These two bands share thousands of years of common history. However, the last one

¹ The ancestors of the Eastern Band are those who hid in the mountains during the removal or returned from Oklahoma soon after removal. The Western Band are those Cherokees who remained in Oklahoma after the forced removal. Approximately 150,000 Western Band tribal members live in Tahlequah today.

hundred and seventy-five years spent as separate entities, has caused tremendous differences in the social functions of the bands. In regards to the tourism industry, what can be said for the Eastern Band may not (and in many cases) cannot be said for the Western Band. These two bands are, for the most part, politically allied even when socially opposed. Despite the fact that both bands possess similar means for marketing their history through the tourism industry, I will focus on the Eastern Band because their unique location has allowed a tourism economy to flourish in Cherokee, North Carolina for decades.

In 2003, Barbara Duncan and Brett Riggs published Cherokee Heritage Trails Guidebook, a cultural study of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians located in the Great Smoky Mountains of Western North Carolina.² Though the guidebook's authors focus on Cherokee individuals, festivals, arts, crafts and sites, they cannot completely escape the essential economic (and arguably, characterizing) touchstone of Cherokee: the Indian tourism industry. The guidebook explains the emergence of Cherokee tourism in the following manner,

“During the early part of the century, logging and farming provided income and subsistence, but the tribe also turned to tourism as a source of income. The first Cherokee Indian Fall Fair, in 1914, was subsidized by the tribal council specifically to encourage tourism. The opening of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in 1934, adjacent to the Qualla Boundary, although controversial within the tribal government, was finally welcomed as a way to attract visitors, who brought a new source of income. Tourism, however, proved to be a double-edged sword. Although sales of beadwork encouraged the continuation and development of those traditions, Cherokees found that they also had to change some traditions to meet the expectations of their market. Influenced by the Wild West shows of the 1890s, by the

² Barbara Duncan & Brett Riggs, *Cherokee Heritage Trails Guidebook* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). See Appendix A for area map.

stereotypes of patent medicine shows of the early 1900s, and by movies and finally television, visitors wanted to see natives in Plains Indians costume. Visitors also preferred shiny black Catawba pottery rather than ancient stamped pottery of the Cherokees... These market-driven changes in tradition coexist with the older traditions today.”³

Co-existence may be the best way to describe modern Cherokee culture and a tourist economy but, like with any two strong spirits within a confined space, this co-existence is not always comfortable. The Indian tourism industry as an economic structure limits the options for overcoming cultural and racial stereotypes of American “Indianness.” Cherokees must operate within an American economic system that requires a detachment from their traditional Cherokee culture.

The appropriation of Plains Indian imagery not only reconfigures Cherokee cultural identity and personal interactions but also solidifies a symbol of economic survival for all of Indian Country. Cherokees, like all American Indian communities, have the choice to embrace American tourism as a viable means of economic survival or shun it for its potential exploitative capacity. In doing so, they choose which symbols and imagery will move within and through their communities as well as if these will be commodified. However, as bell hooks explains, "Appropriating - taking something for one's own use - need not be synonymous with exploitation. This is especially true of cultural appropriation. The 'use' one makes of what is appropriated is the crucial factor."⁴ In a quest for cultural survival under the demands of American citizenship, the people of Cherokee, North Carolina have raised an important question. How does a people appropriate, for economic purposes, the imagery of another culture, commodify it and yet

³ Duncan & Riggs, *Cherokee Guidebook*, 34.

⁴ bell hooks, *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 11.

attempt to maintain their own cultural autonomy? The answer is heard by all of Indian Country and deeply felt by the Cherokee people.

It is important to remember that this tourism also provides the imagery that defines what is "American Indian" in the eyes of the greater United States, the world and most importantly, Indian Country. This is not a case of Eastern Cherokees selling Sioux headdresses. This is a case of Eastern Cherokees selling Taiwanese headdresses that replicate Sioux culture. Cherokees recognize U.S. (though also international) tourism demands and concede. Tourism becomes a national stage for the "Indian" performance.

More importantly, Cherokee, with its Indian tourism industry, takes place within an American national narrative. American citizens seek their own national identity, their own citizenry and belonging, through recognizable narrated histories. The strongest historical narratives are those with the oldest foundations, those that explain the emergence of American nationhood. The national narrative defines the American against an "Other." Because the oldest "Other" is Native American, the national narrative requires the accessibility to Native American imagery or characterization. As modern Americans search for their own national inclusion they are able to re-affirm their American identity by a comparative visit to a stronghold of "Otherness," in this case, Cherokee, North Carolina. For Cherokee peoples to become economically viable American citizens, they have chosen to function within this national narrative. This national narrative search through capitalism has become imbedded in Cherokee culture and caused significant division within the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

The national narrative is limited in its very conception. While it inherently seeks assimilation of American "Others," it simultaneously requires the maintenance of

"Otherness." A typical day for Cherokee Americans progresses in much the same way it would for any other American. However, within the context of Cherokee, North Carolina, the upkeep of the tourism industry necessitates daily reminders of ethnic and cultural "Otherness." These reminders range from imagery to visitor's comments to political discourse. For a tourism industry to thrive on the reservation, a national narrative, engaged by American tourists, must be present. The assimilation process must be evident, at least in its economic and citizenry functions. But a complete assimilation of the Cherokee Indian is undesirable and worthless in the tourism economy that seeks "Otherness."

Other authors have written extensively about Indian imagery, the commodification of peoples in a consumer market, and/or tourism's impact on community structure. Phil Deloria's Playing Indian explains the American obsession with connecting with Indian culture as a form of self-discovery and validation.⁵ A vast collection of literature such as Robert Berkhofer, Jr.'s The White Man's Indian, examines specific imagery espoused in white representations of Indian culture.⁶ However, most studies of Indian-White commercial encounters focus on collecting and exhibiting cultures by non-natives. Shepard Krech III and Barbara Hail's edited compilation, Collecting Native America and Carter Meyer and Diana Royer's Selling the Indian, present market demands of "authenticity," and a placing of this "authentic" Indian market in the American West.⁷ They offer several authors' interpretations of the responsibility of collecting ranging from personal motivations to educational initiatives. In a similar,

⁵ Phil Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

⁶ Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man's Indian* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1978).

⁷ Shepard Krech III and Barbara Hail, eds., *Collection Native America 1870-1960* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999); Carter Jones Meyer & Diana Royer, eds., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing and Appropriating American Indian Culture* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 2001).

though more detailed vein, Leah Dilworth's Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past, explores the indigenous Southwest as a bastion for American quests to preserve a "vanishing" culture during the 1880s through the 1920s.⁸ American consumer citizenship has received attention from Thorstein Veblen and Karl Marx to the contemporary Lizabeth Cohen and Ann Ducille.⁹ Robert Weems, Jr., Garcia Canclini and Arlene Davila have explained the significance of consumer citizenship in the quest for American citizenship.¹⁰ Acting as or obtaining American legal citizenship requires that one participate in a free market society by both producing and consuming goods. They must not only obey the laws of this country, but also the social structures such as capitalism.

However, in this study I will take these three areas, Indian imagery, cultural commodification and cultural tourism into a context of American narrative and citizenship. I will remove these issues, largely, from hypothetical discourse and provide voices from both outsiders and insiders who can comment on the daily interactions between tourism and the Cherokee people. Cherokee's location forces us to consider why Plains imagery persists outside of the American West. By aligning economy and cultural "Otherness" we can better understand America's affirmation of nationhood

⁸ Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).

⁹ Thorstein Veblen, "Conspicuous Consumption;" Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret;" Ann Ducille. "Toy Theory: Black Barbie and the Deep Play of Difference" all in, Juliet Schor and Douglas Holt, eds. *The Consumer Society Reader* (New York: The New Press, 2000), pp. 187-259; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003).

¹⁰ Robert E. Weems Jr., *Desegregating the Dollar: African American consumerism in the twentieth century* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Arlene Davila, *Latinos, Inc.: The Marketing and Making of a People*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Nestor Canclini, George Yudice, trans., *Consumers and Citizens: Globalization and Multicultural Conflicts*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

through the market place. How is citizenship commodified in the body of the "Other" in the search for an American identity? What forms of imagery is necessary for this national identity? I will address what national narratives are sought and maintained through the tourism phenomenon. Though somewhat amusing, it is necessary to ask why so many Americans claim to have a "great-grandmother who was a Cherokee Indian princess." Why not a Lakota? Why a *great-grandmother*? Why a *princess*? And for the purpose of this study: How can/do Eastern Cherokees cash-in on these claims in a tourism economy? How does imagined Cherokee royalty become very real Cherokee royalties?

CHAPTER I

LAND OF ENCHANTMENT

Cherokee People, Cherokee Tribe

A study of Cherokee tourism requires focus more on commercial “Cherokee” products and less on historical sites. Cherokee has changed but visitors are, without fail, drawn to what it has to offer. For generations, tourist families return to the Great Smoky Mountains in effort to pass on the custom of a vacation with the Indians. In my interviews, along with those conducted by tribal agencies, tourists consistently remark that they have been coming to Cherokee with their families since a young age. While most tourists agree, if prompted, that the history and culture of the Cherokees is interesting, they initially respond that they spend their time in Cherokee at the shops and surrounding business attractions such as bear zoos.¹¹ These familial customs incorporate the purchase of goods from Cherokee stores. Tourists will return to Cherokee to buy moccasins for their children similar to those that they wore as a child. This focus on Cherokee commodities provides tourists with a necessary detachment from the people of Cherokee or the historical aspects of the community. These would require questioning of the “American Dream” by tourists. Tourists can feel an attachment to the Cherokee culture without confronting issues of forced Indian removal or reservation poverty.

Used as an ad campaign by Harrah’s Cherokee Casino, the “Land of Enchantment” slogan promoting Cherokee, North Carolina, both addresses a national

¹¹ Tourists visiting Cherokee, NC, interview by Annette Saunooke, 26 November 2003.

fascination with exotic Indian lands and a facade of imagery and that typifies Cherokee's tourist attractions. This "Land of Enchantment" image echoes New Mexico's motto yet provides an accessible forum to experience it on the East Coast. "Land of Enchantment," promises beautiful landscapes and plentitude without making any uncomfortable mention of racial tensions, tourist voyeurism, or historical grief.

Community imagery is valuable for more than its outside advertising capabilities. It defines that community's people and culture through physical symbols and metaphors that will last far longer and reach much further than any ethnological study or historical publication. For Cherokee, such an imagery is re-enforced by its tourism industry and saturates its social, economic and legal structures as they operate on the reservation, in the United States and in Indian Country. Cherokee is identified publicly and privately by "chiefing" in front of teepees (where Cherokee men dressed in Plains Indian costume pose for tourists' pictures), bright feather-crowned dancers (who perform both at powwows and in parking lots for tips doing modern Pan-Indian dances), and Indian princesses (reflecting America's obsession with claiming a Cherokee Indian Princess as a relative, usually a great-grandmother). As the Cherokee people struggle to hold onto their traditions, they must meet the public criteria for "Indianess" along side the culture of its traditional identity. To exist both economically and legally within the borders of the United States, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) must balance these two conflicting identities, all while confronting the essential issues of Americanism just as their mainstream American neighbors.

Though relying upon and promoting false historical tourism may appear to outside communities as a tale of cultural degradation, this community's economy in

reality offers a much more positive testimony to true cultural preservation. The Cherokees have always been traders of both their own products and those of other tribes and later Europeans. They have adapted to new pressures and problems through traditional and American legal systems. Tourism is simply the newest method of this adaptive behavior.

Cherokee utilizes another culture as its agent or model of tourism. Cherokee is able to survive economic demands of "Indianness" while distancing its own sacred traditions and cultural practices.¹² These may be lost or even die in the process but they will not be appropriated by outsiders.¹³ The tourism industry has dropped the glass box on the Qualla Boundary. While it in many cases preserves the culture through its display, it also disallows for cultural outgrowth and the adaptation for which the Cherokee Nation is so revered. In order to survive economically, Cherokee must maintain a sanctuary of "Indianess" (as opposed to tradition) that includes a specific script for the peoples and activities of the Eastern Band. Because tourism, in a sense, eats away at the culture it exploits, safeguarding from exposure is sometimes necessary. Ideally, the glass box provides a window for tourists while maintaining a barrier from their influence. Where, when, and how tourists are able to penetrate the box has not always been in Cherokee control and is often subject to consumer demand.

Doing the Town

¹² For example, the director of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, Ken Blankenship, comments that the only legal restrictions regarding display are associated with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and displaying human remains. However, the museum authorities and Cherokee contributors agreed to restrict information regarding sacred formulas and medicines. This both protects them from outside use and safeguards the museum from lawsuit due to improper use of the information. Museum Director Ken Blankenship, interviewed by Annette Saunooke, 18 January 2004.

¹³ Some sacred medicines and ceremonies still exist for the EBCI regardless of their public presentation, though certainly many have been lost.

Having worked in a gift shop on the reservation for many years, I cannot count the number of times I have been asked by tourists where they can "see the Indians." The token answer many gift shop employees render directs these visitors to the Oconaluftee Indian Village, a reproduction of a Cherokee village from the 1750s. Here, Cherokees dressed in traditional clothing guide tours where visitors can see traditional crafts being made, tour traditional homes and witness customary dances. The employees of the village do not live at the site, but the village certainly reproduces a Cherokee domestic setting.

However, many times tourists are not satisfied with my suggestion of visiting the Oconaluftee Indian Village. They repeat, "No, we want to see where the *real* Indians live." Admittedly, I am often compelled to send them on a "wild goose chase" of sorts but their request sparks issues of authenticity and human display within Indian tourism. One might need to ask what images are these tourists seeking and to what extent should and can Cherokee people accommodate these wishes? In November of 2003, I interviewed various tourists visiting a shopping area of Cherokee. I asked them what their expectations of Cherokee were prior to their first visit to the area. While at least half answered that they had no expectations or only of the natural beauty, the remainder of those surveyed sought something more than they found. These expectations ranged from more farming to, "Indians on horses, scalping people" and "Indians sitting around a campfire getting high."¹⁴ All answered in jest, but this type of honest humor is certainly indicative of the various images that precede a typical reservation visit. The humor

¹⁴ Tourist visiting Cherokee, North Carolina interview/survey #3, interview by Annette Saunooke, 26 November 2003. These are the combined answers of a family of brothers and sisters in their late twenties to early thirties.

attached to their answers signified colloquial acceptance of stereotypical imagery as well as the lack of historical background with which to replace such comments.

With this imagery in mind, tourists seek a consumer market in which these images are commodified and available for purchase. The market delineates the acceptable level of Cherokee traditional craftsmanship that can exist within the community's economy. So what do tourists find when they come to Cherokee? Certainly there are a number of traditional crafts such as pottery and baskets. However, in most Cherokee shops, even these items have been altered for mass markets. In the Cherokee tourism marketplace, handmade traditional crafts such as double-woven river cane or white oak baskets and clay pottery compete directly with manufactured plastic drums and miniature teepees. This is all to say, the culture and heritage of Cherokee people competes directly with the images demanded of them by the tourism mass market.

As Sarah Hill has noted, "The baskets inform us about their makers' work, environments and concepts. Their different forms and functions signal the weavers' efforts to develop varied markets. The baskets' commercial appeal points to consumer values of non-Native buyers...."¹⁵ Hill explains that Cherokee women, more so than men, had focused their skills on the production of "non-utilitarian vessels" by the early twentieth century in order to meet buyer demand.¹⁶ Often this simply meant using new, more accessible materials or more eye-catching styles. Lucy Nola George has claimed the distinction of "popularizing" the use of honeysuckle for basket weaving in the late

¹⁵ Sarah Hill, "Marketing Traditions: Cherokee Basketry and Tourist Economies," Carter Meyer and Diana Royer, ed., *Selling the Indian: Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures*, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2001), 212.

¹⁶ Sarah Hill, "Marketing Traditions," 213.

1920s.¹⁷ This type of loose weaving style is not suitable for daily domestic use but is popular in gift shops because of the baskets' relatively low prices. While I would argue that household items such as baskets and pottery have maintained at least a thread of traditional craftsmanship, most items sold since the influx of tourism to the Qualla Boundary during the 1930s and 40s have been synthetic manufactured replicas of Plains Indian clothing, jewelry and symbols. Craft shops sell far more plastic drums and rubber tomahawks than any form of basketry or pottery. The literal buying into a culture, at least in Cherokee's case, is therefore more superficial than sincere.

Along with gift shops filled with Plains imagery souvenirs (sometimes produced by The Cherokees Manufacturing Company, sometimes shipped in from overseas) tourists can have their pictures made with one of the several roadside "Chiefs" that dress in bright headdresses and stand in front of teepees.¹⁸ They can then go to one of two bear zoos and feed the caged animals stale bread and wilted lettuce or go take in a powwow style dance performance in a nearby parking lot.¹⁹ A more historical, though not flawless drama presentation, "Unto These Hills" is performed nightly in an outdoor drama setting. The show narrates the story of the Cherokees during the removal period, including dance and singing performances. None of these attractions have completely escaped both internal and external debates regarding their cultural appropriateness. Each debate grabs hold of imbedded expectations of a "primitive" or utopian society that many visitors and sometimes locals expect to find in Cherokee. These performative narratives are essential

¹⁷ Sarah Hill, *Marketing Traditions*, 214.

¹⁸ In this case, the title of "Chief" is a self-proclaimed marketing tool and reflects no political or social authority within the tribe.

¹⁹ There are cultural attractions such as a museum, outdoor drama and the aforementioned Indian village but the immediate impression is commercial and these more culturally accurate attractions entice fewer numbers of visitors.

to an Indian tourism economy and seem to highlight local social tensions while maintaining the aforementioned glass box.

Discovering Your Roots

Given its cultural inappropriateness, why market this particular Plains Indian image? Or rather, why is it marketable? Plains Indian tribes (specifically the Sioux and Comanche) are the only tribes in history that have been immortalized in a national narrative of warfare with the United States. In the Indian Wars of the west we find the most modern native-white encounter narratives in America. These Indian Wars narratives were adapted for mass market literature throughout the United States, whereas earlier white-native encounters (i.e. Cherokee's 17th and 18th century experiences) predated a unified national history. For the American narrative, Indian Removal seems less "memorable" than war. Eastern tribes certainly fought colonization but in most cases either adapted (certainly with losses) or were eradicated. In all cases their struggles never faced the national showcase that the Indian Wars of the West did. Therefore, American heroes (i.e. Indian fighters) only had a place in the West. While Custer was one of the first U.S. soldiers to die in The Battle of Little Big Horn, he has until quite recently been heralded as an American hero for his arrogant role in the killing of the Sioux. As a result, their Indian counterparts were also locked in the western motif of savage simpleton fighting the U.S. Calvary. The Indian Wars narratives, presented most often in the Wild West shows and later, Westerns, provide proof of control over (through the confinement of set narrative) the only American "Other." This "control" is necessary because Native Americans may have more natural claims to North America than non-Native Americans.

Furthermore, capturing of these images in popular culture expressed another form of control and manipulation of accepted American “Indianness.” Because tourism is a ritual of affirming nationhood, this controlled “Other” has become the most economically sought after Indian image in all of Indian Country.²⁰ This image is so powerful that Cherokee people even accept this image as a pathway into an American narrative. Before “chiefing” and Indian fairs, many Native Americans sought profits in the entertainment business by participating in Wild West shows and exhibitions all over the country. This is perhaps one of the earliest forms of a Pan-Indian movements toward economic survival and solidifying a national narrative of “Indianess.” It is this type of cultural performance that tourists have sought in Cherokee for decades. Visitors can acquire Indian elements, through products, re-enacting how their western heroes acquired indigenous goods in raids of Indian villages and camps.

However, a great deal has changed in Cherokee tourism and its visitors’ expectations in the past forty years, since the completion of the Blue Ridge Parkway in 1959. Two strong indicators of this change are John Gulick’s book, Cherokees at the Crossroads and H.J. Kupferer’s dissertation for the University of North Carolina’s Anthropology department, “The Principal People 1960.”²¹ Both studies concentrate on the composition of Cherokee’s economy and emerging tourism industry. Gulick explains that in 1950 the per capita income for the three reservation counties was a mere \$575 annually compared to North Carolina’s per capita income of \$1,011 annually.²² Approximately four hundred families were involved in the logging industry but only

²⁰ For more on patriotic ritual through tourism see: Marguerite Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity 1880-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

²¹ H.J. Kupferer, “The Principal People 1960.” Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 1961.

²² John Gulick, *Cherokees at the Crossroads* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960) 18.

netted an average of \$50 annually from this commerce. Cherokees were in dire need of an economic shot in the arm.

The relationship between the U.S. federal government and that of Indian tribes requires that the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), under the Department of Interior, provide agents to reservations who act on behalf of the tribe for social and economic betterment. Therefore, unlike many communities who seek to renew their economic stability through town or city governments, Cherokee's operations were and are under the jurisdiction of the BIA. Cherokee BIA agents felt that Indian tourism would offer the best chance for economic stability. As the federal government established a foundation for tourism through the park service, concerned citizens of western North Carolina scrambled to structure the experience for a projected insurgence of visitors.²³ Kupferer asserts that by 1960, the Cherokee people built a community around “the Protestant Ethic” as Max Weber defined it.²⁴ Kupferer goes on to claim that it is the Cherokee middle-class that is “engaged in business enterprise.”

Though this may be of no surprise in any community, it speaks to the class distinction within Cherokee that proved essential for identity debates in the following decades. Cherokee tourism has created a class economy. Those in the tourism business have access to the only stable economic system within Cherokee's boundaries. Commercial property on the Qualla Boundary is rare and has generally passed down through families.²⁵ Property prices have dramatically increased in the past few decades

²³ Chapter three explores the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway in more detail.

²⁴ Kupferer, “The Principal People 1960” p. 134.

²⁵ The land where the Qualla Boundary is located has always been owned by the Cherokee people, though briefly in the name of Will Thomas (an white man adopted by the Cherokee who had the ability own land when Indians did not). Each Cherokee family owned their own plots of land and decided to bring these deeds together and put them in trust with the Federal government. They were then issued a possessory

in disproportion to local wages. Therefore, large tracts of land rarely change hands, causing certain families to be known as tourism families. If other Cherokees are interested in the tourist industry, they have the opportunity to rent space but ownership is limited. Therefore, economic stability/middle-upper class status has generally passed along family lines. Tourism promotes economic inequality among the Cherokee.

If Gulick and Kupferer presented a crucial “crossroad” for Cherokee in the early sixties, Patsy Scott took a step further to understand Cherokee’s tourism potential. In her 1969 study, Scott observed that, “Cherokee possesses a three-way base for... development: 1) historical (Indian and frontier), 2) artistic (Indian and Mountain crafts) and 3) geographic (the natural beauty and climate of location of the reservation coupled with its strategic location).”²⁶ Her data collection supports this thesis. Sixty-seven percent of visitors came for vacation followed by eighteen percent for sightseeing, surpassing rather low percentages that came for business (five percent) or just passing through the area (six percent). Forty-two percent of visitors stayed in Cherokee for a period of one week while only fifteen percent stayed for one day.²⁷

All of these statistics seem promising for Cherokee if they had been maintained. However, recent surveys have found that most tourists simply pass through on their way to or from Tennessee and rarely stay more than one night in the area.²⁸ Cherokee’s tourism statistics are a strong reflection of the Southeastern United States’ economy and a reminder that Scott’s hope for historical, artistic and geographical tourism might not

holding and under land jurisdiction of the BIA. The families then were given individual possessory titles by the BIA for their individual plots. Today, possessory titles can be exchanged (monetarily or for land) among tribal members.

²⁶ Patsy Scott, *Observations of an Optimist: A Summarizing Study of Problems, Practices, and Potential on the Cherokee Indian Reservation* (Western Carolina University, 1969), 11.

²⁷ Patsy Scott, *Observations*, 38-39.

²⁸ This information is a compilation of tourist surveys taken on November 26, 2003, discussions with business owners and dept. of travel and promotion statistics for 2003.

sustain a community through hard economic times. It is important to note here that prior to a series of factory closing in the southeast, Cherokee drew families on extended vacations from the factory industries that were interested in experiencing a variety of historical and cultural activities that Cherokee had to offer. As visitors decline, so do their interest in activities away from shopping centers. Most tourists today claim that they stop through Cherokee in order to shop for “Indian” products such as turquoise jewelry, moccasins, trinkets, headdresses, drums and dream catchers.²⁹ As the tourism industry struggles to survive, a typical “Cherokee experience” is reduced to a quick Cherokee purchase. Shopping requires no commitment to lengthy stays or personal engagements with the community. Yet, they provide physical proof of the visit to a Indian community.

The Indian narrative sought by tourists was obviously not an overwhelmingly historical one, but a performance narrative. Scott’s study shows that in 1969 two hundred and thirty-seven tourists preferred the natural beauty of the area to only sixty-nine tourists who preferred souvenir shops. While 156 tourists answered that they preferred “Historical Entertainment,” an exit survey proves the growing trend of Cherokee cultural misconceptions.³⁰ Scott’s survey questions, “As a result of your visit, are you aware of the unique history and culture of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians?” One hundred and forty-nine tourists answered yes. One hundred and sixty-two answered no.³¹

If these tourists are not looking for historical accuracy in regards to Cherokee culture, they are seeking their own historical, American roots in a place believed to

²⁹ Cherokee tourists, interview by Annette Saunooke, 26 November 2003. EBCI Office of Travel and Promotion Annual Tourism Conference, Summer 2003.

³⁰ Patsy Scott, *Observations*, 41.

³¹ Patsy Scott, *Observations*, 43.

preserve the earliest days of continental ties. Most people with any ties to Indian Country know the old joke that all Americans have a great-grandmother who was a “Cherokee Indian princess.” Offering this “information” to Cherokee locals claims a right to be in Cherokee, a belonging that tourists often feel needs to be asserted. Phil Deloria explains this desire to seek identity through others in his book Playing Indian. Deloria observes, “We construct identity by finding ourselves in relation to an array of people and objects who are not ourselves. Every person and thing is Other to us. We situate some Others quite closely to the Selves we are calling into being; Others, we place so far away as to make them utterly inhuman.”³² Many times visitors to Cherokee can “find themselves” not in the “real” people and crafts of the Cherokee but in those that are offered for their convenience. These include the roadside chiefs and the plastic teepees and headdresses in the souvenir shops. But this is more than a collection of individual searches. Cherokee tourism, and largely Indian tourism, is a search for American identity.

Identity quests are often begun in times of trauma or conflict. Indian tourism, specifically Cherokee, is no different. Its popularity hit its intensity post World War I and was a response to the American quest for economic citizenship. Of this, Jane Becker explains,

By the First World War, tradition and the folk had come to serve important roles in shaping a national cultural, as well as political and economic, identity that would distinguish America in an international context. The years during and immediately after the war saw the inception of institutions and cultural definitions that expressed a homogeneous vision of the ideal community, in vivid contrast to the actual growing diversity of American society. America’s vision of her folk became entwined with her vision of her

³² Deloria, p. 21.

distant past - *folk* became synonymous with *colonial*, and the impetus for the collecting and restoration efforts that we associate with the colonial revival also encouraged the collecting of folk arts and crafts and music, not to mention the enshrinement of the pre-industrial artisan.³³

Such movements require finding our national roots before we can act internationally. As mentioned before, the national Indian narrative has long been of western Plains culture. But when the largest portion of the American population resides on the east coast, communities such as Cherokee are asked to fill in as the quintessential colonial "Other" necessary for the affirmation of the American folk, i.e. an American cultural history. Being able to purchase a piece of this culture could confirm even further the rights to American citizenship through economic acquisition. Owning a piece of American culture associated oneself with that culture intimately and became a method of possessing American culture.

Economic citizenship requires an outlet for conveyance as well as limitations. In the case of American citizenship, seekers need a proving ground, somewhere or somehow to socially act within the national narrative. At the same time, economic citizenship structures a limitation of those who can participate in the citizenship market. One must wield capital, one must invest in the perpetuation of the national narrative and one must be able to compare his or her qualification for citizenship to a distinctly "un-American" Other. Economic citizenship is most sought after by those who have at some point been considered the "un-American" Other. This is true of the people of southern Appalachia, where Cherokee is located. These people have been referred to nationally as "hillbillies," "rednecks," "backwoods," and American folk. In their struggle for acceptance within the

³³ Jane Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 4.

national narrative, as citizens and not Others, they had to provide a comparison which would allow them to be the "civilized" candidates for American citizenship. Because of their location and comparative craft culture, the Eastern Cherokees provided this much needed Otherness. Early on, the purchase and display performances of the "uncivilized" Cherokees allowed otherwise "backward" people of southern Appalachia to purchase a position of authority in the area. Just as urban Americans clamored to acquire examples of "primitive" American crafts, the artisans of these crafts could employ their own purchasing power to acquire native crafts or visit native exhibits.

Cherokees are asked to maintain a timeless past that is unthreatening to other mountain cultures, whose own progression is questioned nationally. Cherokees must provide the products necessary for outside ownership but never pass into the realm of industrialization. They must maintain the public image of pre-industrial capitalist if a tourism economy is to continue to thrive off the imagined Cherokee identity. Most visitors to Cherokee are from lower to middle-class southern homes. Cherokee has offered an affordable option for local vacationing, an American tradition of cultural comparison and the unique opportunity for both communities to seek economic citizenship through each other.

These mass claims to ownership of Cherokee culture have also raised the stakes in asserting "authentic" Cherokee heritage. For this reason, Cherokees disassociated themselves from tourist products. This exemplifies Cherokee individuality and right to a cultural heritage denied to the average tourist. More relevant to Cherokees are the reliance on phenotypic traits to distinguish themselves from the American multitudes claiming not merely Indian ancestry but specifically Cherokee ancestry. This

“traditional” racial segregation from the greater United States has both symbolized tribal sovereignty as well as attracted curious outsiders.

CHAPTER II

SEMANTIC IDENTITY

The semantic debate between “traditionalists” and “progressives” is vital to understanding the impact of tourism on eastern Cherokee identity. While practically every historian, ethnologist, and/or anthropologist has separated the makeup of Cherokee peoples into traditionalists and progressives (dating back to before the removal period), they have neglected to define the complexities and the problems with such simple labels.³⁴ These labels have been projected back onto the community and tribal members' motives of preserving traditional Cherokee life ways. Preserving a culture concerns more than making crafts, learning history and speaking a language. It is depends upon culturally appropriate adaptations to a changing world. If Cherokee culture was as primitive as many Indian communities have been historically stereotyped, meaning it never adopted customs of other cultures, then it would have died long ago.

Unfortunately, given only two options, traditional or progressive, the people of Cherokee find themselves losing their culture just as they attempt to preserve it. In academic and media rhetoric, progressives have been allied with white initiatives, especially tourism. Thus, tourism lies outside the realms of “traditional” Cherokee. These terms have come to serve political divisions on the Qualla Boundary in much the same way Americans assert allegiances with Republicans or Democrats. Cherokee

³⁴ For one example, see James Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees* (Asheville, NC: Bureau of American Ethnology, 1891).

political debates are divided along these two lines and each issue is described by its "traditional" or "progressive" characteristics.

Vulnerability caused by an identity economy, i.e. tourism imagery, has caused the insecurities of Cherokee people to re-circulate within Cherokee's own boundaries. Indian tourism has been the primary tool used to deal without outside problems, such as fitting into American citizenship, as well as the solution to inner social problems such as poverty. It is a limited tool and one that is dependent on outside acceptance.

A detachment from a realistic Cherokee narrative may further distinctions between traditionalists and progressives. Progressives, i.e. those involved in the tourist industry, uphold cultural myths and literally commodify and sell the Cherokee identity. As we will see in the following chapters, categorizations of "progressives" or "traditionals" has been re-contextualized through access to economic mobility to have ties to of race and class. In a modern Cherokee setting, traditional often translates to lower-middle class with higher blood quantum levels. Progressive translates to upper-middle class with a history of intermarriage. When this occurs, Cherokees have accepted an economically controlled definition of cultural preservation. Dime store novels and ethnic exhibitionists present a narrative of primitive, underdeveloped, Indians. Racially and economically driven categorizations of traditionalists or progressives preserve these ethnocentric ideas. Moreover, they distract from the goal of community betterment by implanting biases seemingly in the name of Cherokee cultural preservation.

In the following chapters I will explain further how these economic and racial definitions of "traditionalists" and "progressives" result from federal terminology and alignment. They are a direct response to tourism initiatives and survive in Cherokee

today. It is essential to the process of restructuring Cherokee culture and economy that these terms be addressed and analyzed for their influence on Cherokee social and political systems. These terms can have a very positive impact on Cherokee culture insofar as “traditional” and “progressive” can occupy the same place in Cherokee political and social decisions. A progressive action has the potential to also be traditional when shed of racial and class-based influences. Therefore, a traditional action can also be progressive without alienating specific races (in this case blood quantum levels) or classes. Before this can happen, the influence of a tourism economy on Cherokee identity must be brought to light and deconstructed. One way historians and ethnographers have addressed this semantic debate is through the introduction of the term “accommodationalist.”³⁵ This term signifies cultural changes that are suitable for both some traditional retention as well as welcoming or accepting of outside influences when necessary. Cherokees have a long history of being accommodationalists, however, this term is rarely used in local political and social debates.

³⁵ A term commonly used by Dr. Danielle Moretti-Langholtz.

CHAPTER III

FAIR DEALINGS

In a tourism economy, Cherokee cultural commodities became based on stereotypes. Rummaging through Cherokee's Plains Indian imagery and passing through throngs of soul-searching tourists, one might ask, how did it all come to this? How did a stronghold of Cherokee culture, a relatively isolated community, enter this world market as an influential contributor of both ethnic products and citizenry ideas? In 1924 the United States Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act, formally recognizing the rights of Native Americans under the U.S. constitution.³⁶ Like any significant change to United States law, Indian citizenship was a long process and tumultuous in its realization. While it might, in some cases, take several years before Indians were allowed to participate in voting and interracial marriage, the Bureau of Indian Affairs recognized immediately that American citizenship required economic citizenship.

Like most American Indian tribes, the EBCI struggled to fight poverty just as they battled to maintain cultural identity in its negotiations with the federal government. As a "ward" of the United States, the EBCI was both self-governing and under the "protection" of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. This agency provided a major initiative to introduce more tourism to the area in the form of an annual Indian fair and agricultural showcase.

³⁶ Indian Citizenship Act 1924, summarized in: David Getches, Charles Wilkinson and Robert Williams, Jr., *Cases and Materials on Federal Indian Law*, 4th edition (St. Paul: West Group, 1998), 163-164.

Cherokees had to identify the acceptable product of “Indianness,” fitting within the national narrative context to buy and produce (or sell), before becoming “acceptable” American citizens. But this “product” was not a replica of WASP American materials, symbols or ideals. Instead it was an American ethnicized product. Much the same way that America sponsored the Columbian Exposition to assert a “civilized” identity separate from Europe’s by caging indigenous peoples for display, Cherokees entered the metaphorical cage of Americanization. They became part of America, just as the caged Igorots became part of America (at least in a conquered possession sense) but doing so required framed display fitting within the national narrative. When questioned internationally, as in times of war, America strives to market itself to the world as an *accepting* world power. America is valuable for its inclusion of varied cultures under its laws, practices and rights. It is “the land of plenty” and the land of many. What better way for the United States to introduce its newest citizens, the *American* Indians, than to hold a fair?!

After all, Cherokee craftspeople had been exhibiting their goods in regional fairs for several years.³⁷ The nearest city of Asheville, North Carolina was becoming a booming tourist attraction and marketplace for Cherokee crafts. Not to be left out, the federal Indian office suggested an annual fair for Cherokee in 1912.³⁸ After some debate, the Indian agent at Cherokee agreed to plan the event. There were, however, concerns with sponsoring the Cherokee Indian Fair during the early stages of its planning. After the idea of an Indian fair was proposed, Cherokee’s BIA agent, Frank Kyselka and his successor James Henderson, were skeptical pointing out the need for tribal subsidy and

³⁷ John Finger. *Cherokee Americans: The Eastern Band Cherokees in the Twentieth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 32.

³⁸ *Ibid* p. 32.

that the fair would “pose problems in controlling liquor consumption.”³⁹ Regardless, Henderson soon agreed to a plan the event and enticed United States congressman James M. Grudger to speak at the fair, which offered him the opportunity to address “a large number of white voters”: proof that the fair was both for white entertainment and a political platform of national progress.⁴⁰

Though Henderson was able to achieve overwhelming support from the state and federal government, many tribal members were upset by the use of \$200 in tribal government monies used to finance the event.⁴¹ Henderson appears to have been annoyed by this reaction and reported to his colleagues that, “there was such a howl” from the “non-progressive element” that he had decided not to use funding from the tribal council.⁴² Henderson’s alignment with progressivism, in turn, aligned tribal autonomy with regressive “traditionalism.” “Progressives” by contrast were ready to use tribal money for a commercial purpose, while traditionalists opted out of the market to protect the autonomy of Cherokees.

Nonetheless, the first Cherokee Indian Fair was held in 1914; these fairs did not reach their full development into an agricultural and crafts show until the mid-1920s. As in other American fairs of the era, contests were set up to judge the “best” produce, livestock and crafts presented by the Cherokee people. By the 1950s the fair grew to be a major pull of tourists to the area and local businesses began advertising in the fair pamphlet. The fair’s public announcement promised visitors a peek into the lives of Cherokee peoples and the opportunity to judge Cherokee’s “civilization” through the

³⁹ *Ibid* p. 32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid* p. 32.

⁴¹ *Ibid* p. 32. Finger uses the term “traditionalists,” to describe those Cherokees opposed to the use of tribal funds. I find this definition to be problematic and loaded with conflicting assumptions.

⁴² Henderson to CIA, April 15, 1915, quoted in: John Finger, *Cherokee American*, 32.

presentation of their products. BIA organizers did not shy away from the use of this exhibition as a means for molding the Cherokee people into what they believed to be proper United States citizens. The following 1932 pamphlet introduction expresses the fair's and BIA's mission for an upcoming event. It reads,

ANNOUNCEMENT

The premium list of the eighteenth annual Cherokee Indian Fair is herewith presented. The fair this year will be held October 6-9, and the management takes pleasure in announcing that an unusually large and attractive display of exhibits, both agricultural and industrial will be on exhibition this year. These exhibits will be so selected as to show the resources of the Cherokee Indian Reservation, as well as the resourcefulness of the Indian population. This is a real Indian fair, and we are sure the public will be interested to know that a very large display of real Indian arts and crafts, such as baskets, pottery, bead work, etc., is being arranged for and will be made a special feature this year.

Since its beginning the aim and purpose of this fair has been to stimulate and encourage among the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians a keener interest in farming, and to promote a greater desire for better homes and better living. These aims have been kept steadily in view over a period of seventeen years, and now taking a backward glance over this period of years we are encouraged to continue the forward march toward the ideal in American citizenship.⁴³

Thus, one of the earliest tourism initiatives was deeply rooted in the procurement of the ideal Indian Other. Federal agents saw the opportunity to bring much needed income to the reservation, provide tourists with an opportunity to witness a unique culture and instill in the Cherokee people those very qualities that the tourists had come to see. These early attractions began to be transposed onto the Cherokee people. Cherokees began to make

⁴³ *1931 Cherokee Indian Fair program* (Box 1, Indian Fair Pamphlet Collection), 1. Courtesy of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian archives collection, Cherokee, NC.

their living through crafts and entertainment that were suitable to the tourism market. A visiting tourist would reflect on his or her encounter with a Cherokee as an experience involving products such as baskets and pottery in a very rural, agricultural setting.

A “real” Indian experience was more about objects and place than about a person-to-person encounter. Tourist could browse exhibits, comment on the quality of prize winning specimens and watch performances of sport and dance. The setting of a fair eliminated need for tourists to witness local poverty and poor living conditions or even talking with Cherokee people. The only requirement of a fairgoer was to view and judge or compare to non-Native America’s “civilized” production. Were the Cherokees proper agriculturalists? Were their baskets elegant enough to sit in a tourist’s display case? The fairgoers could feel safe from any uncomfortable feelings of interacting with another culture. There was also a beginning and an end to the experience. All that tourists had to take away with them at the end of the day was what they had purchased.

At the same time, BIA officials could feel confident in the progress of an American Cherokee. Fears of socialism and communism attracting Indian tribes, due to their historically communal economies, could be publicly wiped out through a new Indian commerce that relied largely on the adoption of American market and capitalism structures. The fair, as organizers openly advertised, provided a forum for competitive production and the successful implementation of western agriculture, the epitome of the American dream.

Much like an explorer desiring the perfect specimen of Indian culture, tourists could probe through the craft displays, motivated by the potential of discovery. They could leave with their very own piece of the American ethnic experience, the national

narrative or simply a primitive “Other” that might justify their own civilization. But for those who did not desire to take home a piece, they could at the very least be entertained by performance and the thrill of competition including traditional sports such as stickball as well as exhibit and performance prizes. If the crafts, food and games were initiated to preserve Cherokee culture, the Annual Baby Show and contest acted to preserve the Indian specimen. Nearing the end of a list of daily events planned for the fair, a visitor (or local Cherokee) would come across an explanation of the rules regulating the baby show. The following was a typical example dating from the early days of the Cherokee Indian Fair.

Baby Show

Prizes

1. Prettiest full blood, or near full blood Indian baby: First, \$5.00; Second, \$2.50; Third, \$1.00
2. Fattest full blood, or near full blood Indian baby: First, \$5.00; Second, \$2.50; Third, \$1.00
3. Most perfect physical specimen of full blood, or near full blood Indian baby: First, \$5.00; Second, \$2.50; Third, \$1.00

NOTE: - All babies entering for prize under No. 3 above must be examined by a physician or a registered nurse.

All babies entering above contest must be at least 7/8 Indian. No baby possessing a less degree or quantum of Indian blood than 7/8 will be eligible for entering this contest.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ 1931 *Cherokee Indian Fair program*, page unknown. Courtesy of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian archives collection. Cherokee, NC.

While there is no recorded opposition to such a contest, the baby show apparently ended before the 1950s and appears to be enjoyed as much, if not more, by local Cherokees as by non-Indian visitors to the fair. The blood quantum requirement tells us quite a lot about Cherokees' perception of "Indianness." Even a baby must be judged by legal stipulations. An enrolled Eastern Band Cherokee was required to possess 1/16 Cherokee blood, based on the Baker Roll.⁴⁵ The delineation for the baby contest tells us that there was something unique and special about a "full blood" Indian baby. They were as worthy of exhibition and honor as seamless double-woven baskets and plump red tomatoes. They seemed to represent the protection of a community from interracial propagation. With the Cherokee's strong history of intermarriage, such protection most likely seemed pressing. An isolated novelty for the tourist. This exhibition also further confirmed Cherokees as America's "Others." The full-blood was indirectly judged against a white child. The reduction of qualifying babies to only 7/8 or more blood quantum instead of all Cherokee babies, confirmed the rarity of these Others.

But what message did this send to the Cherokee people? I maintain that this type of focus on "full bloodedness" pointed to the foundation of a racial divide amongst the Cherokee people. Beauty, as stipulated by the contest, was inherent in the "full blood" just as is Indian, though not specifically Cherokee, identity. There was no room for a social or cultural definition of Indianness, at least in a Cherokee showcase. "Traditional" seemed to assume a definition of untainted even when set in a "progressive" economic narrative. A "traditional" body was a muted "full blooded" Indian. The

⁴⁵ The Baker Roll is a 1924 list comprised by the federal government prior to and during the 1830s removal that recorded family names existing in Cherokee territory. To be an enrolled member, one must prove direct lineage from at least one name on the 1924 Baker Roll. There is also a later list comprised in 1934.

"progressiveness" of the event lay in the reception by white visitors to the fair as they fulfilled a need for a commodified and muted American Other.

Prior to the opening of the National Park in 1959, the Cherokee Indian Fair provided one of the few links between Cherokee and the greater American public. More than just an annual event, the fair brought into question Indian identity in the midst of the American citizenry debates. John Finger places the fair in perspective with the United States and a crucial era in its history:

As progressivism on the domestic front was about to become a larger crusade to make the world safe for democracy, the Eastern Cherokees were slowly adjusting to the new industrial age. The changes of the early twentieth century had brought them into contact with the outside world, introduced them to wage labor and the profit incentive, and raised anew the troubling question of whether it was possible-or desirable-to remain an Indian. The coming of a world war and renewed efforts to allot their reservation would test both their resolve and their ability to be part of the modern world while retaining a Cherokee identity.⁴⁶

It was, in fact, the fair's motive to showcase self-sufficiency of the Cherokee people through their agricultural and industrial accomplishments. But this type of exhibition proved to be a catch-22. To fit within the American model, Cherokees were expected to produce marketable products while at the same time maintain enough ethnic Otherness to attract tourists to this remote area. Cherokees were asked to decide how much of their culture to maintain, how much to offer publicly and how to cope with dual citizenships, economically. An example of that was the battle over dancing. During the 1920s the Indian Office made strong efforts to abolish "useless and harmful dances and ceremonies." Dances such as the Booger dance, involving beehive masks, were

⁴⁶ John Finger, *Cherokee Americans*, 32-33.

threatening for their inexplicability to non-Cherokees.⁴⁷ Ironically, Cherokees used the Indian Office sponsored fair to exhibit just such traditions including ball play, dances, and a version of the green corn ceremony.⁴⁸

Other Cherokee traditions would not receive such protection from the tourist market. Historian Sarah Hill explains that “social missionaries” stepped into Southern Appalachia believing that “handicrafts enhanced social and recreational life in rural communities, while reconnecting industrialized America with its lost past and the natural world.”⁴⁹ Just as they claimed to protect and promote crafts such as Cherokee basketry, they, “superimposed their own standards to increase product marketability... they contended it was necessary to ‘subject work to a degree of regulation by those sponsoring the revival.’”⁵⁰ Traditional crafts of the Cherokees were essentially taken out of the hands that made them to be re-conceptualized and valued in an American art market. Crafts that were once functional and representative of family identity were quickly losing all connectivity to their makers. A family of traditional basket makers, long revered for their skill and dedication to the preservation of the art form would lose this identity just as their baskets needed to conform to ascribed markets.

Molding a Cherokee art form or distinctive Cherokee traits required, and arguably still requires, the molding of social and community identity. However, the Cherokee Indian Fair was merely the pre-cursor to a much larger transformative era in Cherokee culture. While the fair reached outside of the Qualla Boundary and offered relief through a national narrative, access to the reservation was still limited. For the federal

⁴⁷ The Booger Dance was a response to the disfigurement of small pox.

⁴⁸ John Finger, *Cherokee Americans*, 59.

⁴⁹ Sarah Hill, “Marketing Traditions,” 216.

⁵⁰ Sarah Hill, “Marketing Traditions,” 216, quoting Eaton.

government, Cherokee needed to diversify its market. And America would once again call for claims to historical and economic citizenship in times of crisis.

CHAPTER IV

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

As evidenced by the Cherokee Indian Fair, the Indian Citizenship Act has permitted native communities such as the Eastern Band to thrive in a tourism market. Government aid in the area and surrounding communities allowed for construction that brought in the roads essential to tourism. However, these changes occurred when Cherokees were beginning their own forms of economic survival and attempts at stability. Cherokees were immersed in a thriving timber industry that at least rivaled other American timber corporations. Cherokee hardly escaped poverty because of this, but federal agents certainly noticed its economic strides. These native industries, such as timber, were a threat to the acceptable American ethnicized product popularized for the Cherokee at their annual fairs.⁵¹ Cherokee timber families did not convey the “proper” Indian image that Americans had come to appreciate and demands such as the environmental Indian that would adorn anti-littering posters in the following decades. Even in the face of extreme economic recovery needs, the frame in which recovery could take place was strictly regulated by federal expectations. Euro-American structured farming headed the list of many strategies to stabilize Indian community economies elsewhere in the United States. However, for the Cherokee, several attempts at agricultural programs proved unsuccessful. An Indian tourism industry in Cherokee that

⁵¹ It is unlikely that Cherokee-run timber businesses posed significant competitions to non-Indian run timber companies.

sprang from a beautiful natural environment appeared to answer both economic and national narrative imagery demands for federal officials.

Though he could not have predicted the economic impact on the Cherokee Indians, Dr. Chase Ambler's vision for a National Park, after hearing a research paper entitled, "Climate treatment of Diseases" presented at a New York medical conference in October of 1885, would soon become the driving force for a new National Park connecting the borders of North Carolina and Tennessee. After the conference, he was quick to plan the perfect place to hold a lifelong study of the topic, and benefit his own health in the meantime.⁵² Ambler moved to Asheville in 1889 (the same year that Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians gained corporate status) and began his campaign to establish a national forest reserve in the Great Smoky Mountains. The Bureau of Indian Affairs soon decided that a proposal for a National Park would bring tourism to the remote area of Cherokee, North Carolina, and maintain their envisioned ecological standards. Cherokees would meld into the mountainous backdrop without much disruption to its beauty while simultaneously attracting visitors for economic stimulation. In the midst of the Great Depression, increased work opportunities promised to not only promote emergence of the Cherokee onto the national scene, but also employ area men in the construction of new roads.

With a backdrop of the Great Depression and with a strong endorsement from Franklin Roosevelt, the park project, under the Weeks Bill, was passed through congress. This initial plan allowed for the Pisgah, Nantahala and Cherokee National Forests. But when the project progressed to suggest a National Park and later the Blue Ridge Parkway,

⁵² Henry W. Lix, "Short History of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park," (unpublished, 1958). Courtesy of Great Smoky Mountains. National Park archives, Sugarland Resource and Archive Center, Gatlinburg, TN.

local timber industries fired back with a strong resistance. The Little River Lumber Company, for example, stood to lose 61,350 acres of its property if the park service expanded its acreage.⁵³ Yet, while the lumber companies had a strong voice, much overlooked was the voice of the Cherokee people. Not only would the reduction of the timber industry mean a loss of jobs for the Cherokee, but previous federal land acquisitions by had resulted in little improvement. Left with no choice but to buy back land after the 1830s removal, Eastern Cherokees had long been their own agents for land acquisition. In the 1919 Treaty of Washington, the had Cherokees ceded one fourth of the Cherokee nation including all remaining land in the present park.⁵⁴ Property loss could be seen as another defeat by the United States and as well as a blatant disregard for the Cherokee way of life.

In 1925 the Swain County Chamber of Commerce in final attempts to promote the new park published a short pamphlet written by Horace Kephart advertising the construction of “A National Park In The Great Smoky Mountains.”⁵⁵ Accompanied with beautiful landscape photos and estimated area maps, the pamphlet attempts to sell the park’s opening to regional white residents. However, the Cherokees are viewed as little more than a side attraction. In Kephart’s words, “they add the last touch of the picturesque to the park region,” rather than the original owners, inhabitants and stewards of a large part of the land in question.⁵⁶ They were expected to fall into the role of tourist attractions and provide crafts and entertainment for visitors who tired of the Smoky

⁵³ Harley Jolley, “One Little Indian,” *The Blue Ridge Parkway* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 35.

⁵⁴ Harley Jolley, *The Blue Ridge Parkway*, 10.

⁵⁵ The Qualla Boundary is located in both Swain and Jackson counties. Approximately one half of Swain Co.’s population is non-native. See map in appendix.

⁵⁶ Horace Kephart, *A National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Bryson City, North Carolina: The Swain County Chamber of Commerce, 1925), 11.

Mountain scenery. This was a role that they had played minimally at regional fairs by selling their crafts, but for the most part it was one that Americans had only read in the words of ethnographers and anthropologists or imagined along side media images of Plains Indians.⁵⁷

Quick to follow national suit in support of the National Park, John D. Rockefeller donated a generous monetary gift for its completion. In return, he asked that the Park Service preserve timberlands and contracts with the Little River Company, a financial interest of his own. Therefore, in the end, the timber industry could claim one small victory while Cherokees had no other recourse other than to adopt to new tourism demands.

Furthermore, when Cherokee tribal government attempted to make a similar offers through land swaps to compensate for the treaty loss of the Ravensford tract, a former site of a Cherokee village, their offers were rejected time and time again. Ravensford stands as one continued example of the deep wounds still associated with federal tourism in Cherokee. Membership rolls had increased and there was a strong desire for farmland adjacent to the Qualla Boundary.⁵⁸ Ravensford was one of these adjacent properties. Even though the EBCI made several attempts to buy more acreage and scenic attributes, they were repeatedly denied. As the park construction progressed, negotiators between the Park Service and the EBCI had negotiated a proposal exchanging Cherokee lands, necessary right-of-way, and the state's promise of "just compensation for damages" for a portion of the Ravensford tract. This would literally pave the way for the Blue Ridge Parkway. Cherokee's BIA agent Harold Fought collected a majority of

⁵⁷ For one of the most comprehensive ethnological examples see: James Mooney, *History, Myths, and Sacred Formulas*.

⁵⁸ John Finger, *Cherokee Americans*, 81-82.

the tribal council votes needed for the proposal approval. However, three of these supporters changed their minds in the last minutes of the council session and the motion was defeated by a vote of six to five.⁵⁹

Had this occurrence ended in the vote, Ravensford probably would have simply joined a collective history of lost tribal lands. But Fought, indignant over the betrayal, cited Fred Bauer's (who was currently serving as Vice Chief of the EBCI) factionalist corruption. Bauer was a formally educated, adopted son of the local Cherokee Blythe family and for these reasons and other political stances, considered a "progressive," by Fought. Undeterred by the professional standards of his BIA positioning, Fought publicly suggested the removal of Bauer for his lack of "sufficient Cherokee blood."⁶⁰ Debates continued, each becoming more and more immersed in socially destructive dialog.

When plans finally got underway for the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Cherokees were hopeful. This new connection of roads would allow for tourism traffic to flow directly onto the reservation. Though it meant yet another cession of land, "originally the reservation section of the parkway was to be the long needed state highway from Soco Gap to Cherokee, for which North Carolina had obtained a right-of-way sixty feet wide. The state then planned to reconvey the property to the United States."⁶¹ Had the National Park Service complied, tourism would have increased, Cherokees would have had a more accessible road system, and the Park Service and the EBCI could have begun the foundation for a successful relationship. Unfortunately, the National Park Service was adamant on acquiring a much wider route along Soco Creek "that would gobble up

⁵⁹ John Finger, *Cherokee Americans*, 92.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

valuable farmland and potential business sites. It would also virtually wipe out the main street of Cherokee and necessitate moving back existing commercial buildings to the Oconaluftee's floodplain. Tribal access to the parkway, moreover, would be limited."⁶²

This dispute solidified the long struggle between the National Park Service and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. In defense, The Eastern Band now began enforcing lines of cultural definition. It seemed obvious that the National Park Service would be allied with the U.S. federal government and the B.I.A. was its negotiator. Because both the B.I.A. and the Park Service promoted the establishment of a large tourism industry for the Cherokee, business entrepreneurs would be linked to both the park and federal government. In defense of the new changes occurring because of the park and road systems, the Park Service promoted their actions as a sign of "progressivism."⁶³ As a result, all Cherokees opposed to any actions by the federal government, park service or tourist industry were left to be labeled as "traditionalists" by federal agents as well as their own community. Soon the tourism industry in Cherokee would become both an economic stabilizer and the sorest point of contention between tribal members. Tourism entrepreneurs, tribal members and non-tribal members, would be viewed as anti-traditionalists as they carried the products most sought by visitors.⁶⁴

Enforcing such beliefs was the restricting of hunting and plant collection by native Cherokees who had depended on the areas' resources for centuries. In her adept analysis of Cherokee/NPS relations, Margaret Lyn Brown introduces "a Cherokee

⁶² Ibid. Citing Harley Jolley, *The Blue Ridge Parkway*, "Chapter eight: One Little Indian," (Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1969).

⁶³ See: John Finger, "A New Park and a New Deal," *Cherokee Americans*. Language of "progressivism" runs throughout this chapter in regards to federal policy.

⁶⁴ This issue is visited several times in: Laurence French and Jim Hornbuckle, eds. *The Cherokee Perspective* (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1981), 26-40.

woman –referred to as a ‘squaw’ by the ranger–was caught removing four small boxwoods from park land and ‘made to plant them back.’”⁶⁵ While the Cherokees could pass freely through park lands, they could no longer live on the grounds or appreciate its natural gifts of game and produce. Living off the land has long been a tie to Cherokee “traditionalism.” It is in fact, one of the ties that is devoid of racial or economical stereotypes. However, the limiting of farmland due to the park’s inception sent a message that “progressivism,” a term used by the NPS to endorse the park, discourages Cherokee agriculture. Cherokee agriculture transformed into a economic issue whereas, Cherokee agriculturalists were not entrepreneurs and vice versa.

Because the birth of tourism on the Cherokee Indian Reservation began in the midst of the Great Depression, Indian tourism experienced a break from the national narrative as America sought to recover economically. Cherokee's economic stability now depended on tourism, but unified local support for such an industry was rare after the inauguration of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway. Competition for commercial property and craft sales brought inter-tribal lawsuits, illegal land acquisitions and sales as well as a further definition of business owners as not only non-traditionalist but often non-Indian.

Ironically, the recent economic stability brought by the GSMNP (especially with the casino) has recently allowed for a national forum of negotiations between the Park Service and the EBCI. In 2003, a land swap between the Park and the Tribe granted the EBCI the Ravensford tract. This land will be used for a new Cherokee school. While the land had originally belonged to the Cherokees, environmentalists were concerned with

⁶⁵ This event occurred within the first couple of years of the Park's opening. Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2000), 117.

the threat of development of any kind and believed the Park to be the best stewards of the land. In the end, a more politically savvy Cherokee entity won out as they continue to pursue social development through the profits of tourism.

CHAPTER V

RE-DEFINING THE COMMODIFIED SELF

As the Cherokee Indian Fair left the watchful eye of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park annually confirmed its tourism purpose, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians slowly emerged as a vibrant corporate entity. Though incorporation was granted in 1889, the band finally realized its economic potential in 1997 with the establishment of Cherokee Harrah's Casino. The United States federal government has been able to increase expectations for a self-sufficient Cherokee tribal government and Cherokee has embraced this role. While Cherokee undergoes major economic changes, traditional and progressive debates have intensified and the Cherokees are now seeking their own national narrative.

Leading up to the casino's inception, Cherokee, though more economically stable in the last half of the 20th century, has become subjected to and a participant in the fluctuations of the U.S. national economy. Prosperous in the 1960s, Cherokee's tourism industry faced a tremendous downturn in profits in the late 1970s along with the rest of the country. The United States responded in a similar fashion that had spurred projects such as the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The federal government (with corporate sponsorship) offered Knoxville as a venue for the 1982 Worlds Fair. Located just across the Smokies from Cherokee, a neighboring world's fair would not only provide a positive narrative for a struggling nation but also provide tourism flow to

Cherokee. But the fair came and went without any positive results, arguably having even a negative effect on the tourist economy of Cherokee.⁶⁶ Annual tourists to the Cherokee area feared traffic congestion and canceled or re-routed their vacations to other destinations. Visitors to the World's Fair rarely ventured outside of the Knoxville area, at least not as far as Cherokee. Thus, Cherokee suffered from a national effort to promote tourism. The attractions at the World's Fair seem to suggest that national narratives were swiftly moving from historical roots to a corporate and scientific future, leaving Indian tourism shelved. The story of the failed tourism insurgence of the World's Fair, a continued struggling Cherokee economy and the establishment of Harrah's Cherokee Casino proved to be a significant swing in the pendulum of Cherokee cultural survival.

A long-time source for an undisturbed American national narrative, the Qualla Boundary, along with a new economic influx from the casino, now provides a fresh opportunity for Cherokees to discover their own narrative and mold it to their cultural identity. However, the long history of tourism and its expectations of the people it exploits, has left lasting impressions on Cherokee and the identity its people seek to publicly assert. Like many other tribes, Cherokees have explored the Pan-Indian movement as a source of Indian identity and a bandage for the wounds of tribal divisions caused by rapid economic and social changes. Ironically, the Pan-Indian movement attaches itself to the same repertoire of stereotypical Plains Indian symbols that often keep Indian tourism separate from specific tribal identities.

Finding a discourse in which to evaluate the sociological impact of Indian tourism on a specific community is a difficult process that requires pulling from various sources of philosophy, anthropology and sociology. Most case studies involve economic impact

⁶⁶ John Finger, *Cherokee Americans*, 159-160.

results but rarely address identity politics. Therefore, in the case of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians I will rely on Herbert Gans', "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America" as it applies to Pan-Indian⁶⁷ identity and imagery. In order to fully understand the impact of ethnic symbols on this community, I will employ the aid of Michel Foucault's The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1. Specifically, I will call on Foucault's theories regarding confession, powers and pleasure.

Gans argues that American ethnics (second through roughly, fourth generation immigrants) have become increasingly apt at expressing their ethnicity through exaggerated symbols. For example, the celebration of Chanukah, "a minor holiday in the (Jewish) religious calendar" becomes a counterpart to the Protestant American Christmas as a means of drawing clear distinctions between the Christians and Jews that would be visible for the third generation of American immigrants forward.⁶⁸ In a sense, Gans is saying that American ethnics most recently have the freedom to assert their ethnicity in contrast to a collective American culture. Instead of accepting assimilation and acculturation as the dominant paradigms, the American ethnic continues to distinguish him or herself in spite of, or rather in response to, a retreating authoritative governance that prior to his or her generation, legally punished ethnic Others. American ethnics seek and find a freedom in the expression of individual cultures under an American umbrella.

⁶⁷ It will be necessary to refer to ethnic group of Native Americans as a whole for the purpose of this chapter and possible to do so through the guise of the Pan-Indian movement that has ultimately linked many tribes in several social movements.

⁶⁸ Herbert Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America," *On the Making of Americans: Essays in Honor of David Riesman* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 205.

Their heritage is seen to add a richness and a spot in the "melting pot" analogy of American.

For American white ethnics, diversity is a truly American quality. It adds a richness to American heritage without offended constructed ideals of Americanness. Although Gans' point holds firm in the presence of European ethnics, he makes no attempt to take on the issues surrounding phenotypic non-white American ethnics. White ethnics do not necessarily have to contend with overt racial markers such as skin color. Perhaps this changes the manner and freedom with which ethnic symbols are employed. The reader is left to question, what about Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native Americans? Do they still use these symbols? While these considerations certainly complicate Gans' argument, this is exactly the point where Foucault can bridge the gap.

Foucault connects the pursuit of truth to the act of confession. It is this confession that removes the repression of secrecy and any guilt related to sexual behavior and discourse. Of this Foucault writes,

The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile...⁶⁹

It is Foucault's appreciation of the power relationship evolving in a confession that I would like to explore in terms of symbolic ethnicity.

⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1*, trans. Robert Hurley. (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 61-62.

Because power plays/relations are so prevalent in the Cherokee community's encounter with American culture, distinctions or symbolic markers between the two have historically been obvious and stereotypical. Products in local gift shops and advertising imagery are proof of this divide. In a market system, Indian tourism tribes must sell objects imbued with negative Indian imagery such as plastic headdresses and tomahawks (for scalping). The power play swings to the consumer's advantage as the receiver of the confession. The content of the confession is Cherokee imagery. The confession, the "truth" could be imagery replicating Plains Indian stereotypes or one of historical Cherokee culture. Even more importantly, without Indian opposition, the "truth" confessed would be one composed by consumer demand.

Historically, the symbols embodied in Native Americans have been romanticized and sexualized as an unnaturally natural other. That is to say, they are as much a deviation from proper behavior as Foucault's hermaphrodites, homosexuals and rapists. Often they have even been described as aberrant. At this point (prior to the last half of the 20th century) in the power relationship, Native Americans *are* repressed as they function as the undisclosed Other. Even though they are often portrayed in naturalistic settings, they still offer unknown danger and diversion. They are still "uncivilized."

When the Cherokee, along with most other U.S. tribes, invested in the pan-Indian movement in the last half of the twentieth century, they essentially confessed these symbols to each other. Powwows emerged with feather and bead clad Indian dancers, and every Indian on "the rez" (respectively) had a dream catcher hanging from her rearview mirror and a red power fist on his t-shirt. These symbols confessed to other Native Americans that they were in some sense aligned just as they confessed or rather,

expressed to non-Natives that there was a boundary that could be physically recognizable. If this is a confession, who then is the intended “authority” who hears the confession?

Since Foucault gives this authority figure “power” in the relationship, it becomes essential to determine who hears a symbolic confession. I would argue that because symbols such as red power stickers and “rez” discourse can only be appreciated by those knowledgeable of their meanings, this confession is directed to the authority of Indian Country. Thus, if we are to accept Foucault’s theory, these symbols intent on giving agency to Native peoples (such as ‘red power’) have successfully been implemented. Native Americans are both the confessors and the receivers of these confessions or identity and commonality. They are both liberated and in control of the method of liberation. The collective known as Indian Country becomes the authority of “authentic Indianness.”

Retrospectively, we turn to Foucault’s “repressive hypothesis.” In this section he argues that characteristics or behaviors of individuals come to create new ‘species’ of people. He writes,

The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology.⁷⁰

We can extend this reasoning to help us understand that the aforementioned symbols of Indianess actually were embodied in the collective Indian. In the nineteenth century Indians were objects of observations by non-Native Americans and Europeans. These

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 43.

perceived traits, in a sense, became them. The feathers that once adorned anthropological photos and drawings came to “be” the Indian as he identifies himself in a social setting such as a powwow. The Indian no longer needed a body, simply an identifiable symbol. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, the “gaze,” as Foucault describes it, was fixed on Native Americans and controlled by primarily white American and European publics. Therefore, Native Americans were not only “fixed by the gaze” but also, “isolated and animated by the attention they received.”⁷¹ It is only after a confession of these symbols (however contrived they may have become) that the gaze can be lifted and Native Americans can begin social movements across the country. Commonality can be found in the confession within Indian Country, disallowing for an authoritative gaze. At the same time, a connection to Indian Country allows for consolidated and supported social movement.

Foucault in fact offers a series of questions that go unanswered in his study, but with the aid of Gans’ piece and this new addition of Native American ethnic symbolism, we can possibly offer a solution. Foucault asks,

Were these (sexual discourses) anything more than means employed to absorb...all this ...attention which has us in a stew over sexuality, is it not motivated by one basic concern: to ensure population, to reproduce labor, to perpetuate the form of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative?⁷²

If we accept ethnic symbols as a similar form of discourse and Cherokees as the reapers of a new empowerment, then the answer is a resounding, yes! Many Native

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 45.

⁷² Ibid. pp. 36-37.

communities have created tourism markets around this symbolic imagery and have thus saved their economies that suffered from land cessions and mineral rights losses. And while in American political discourse, the empowerment of Native Americans is far from conservative, in an Indian Country context, the use of ethnic symbols is extremely conservative, if not backward. It does not seek to engage powers outside of itself; instead is content, if not obsessed, with re-circulating these powers. Because the confession occurs within and requires the marketplace, Pan-Indian Country commodifies its people, if still only confessing within itself.

Fortunately, we can return to Foucault's discourse on power and pleasure to understand why this may occur. Foucault writes,

There was undoubtedly an increase in effectiveness and an extension of the domain controlled; but also a sensualization of power and a gain of pleasure. This produced a twofold effect: an impetus was given to power through its very exercise; an emotion rewarded the overseeing control and carried it further; the intensity of the confession renewed the questioner's curiosity; the pleasure discovered fed back to the power that encircled it.... Power operated as a mechanism of attraction... power anchored the pleasure it uncovered.⁷³

As Gans' suggests in his piece, this is certainly true of symbolic ethnicity. There appears to be no decline of displays of ethnic symbols among European ethnics, and I would argue the same for Native Americans. The very symbols that are confessed become a system of inner-cultural discourse, a discovery of self that proves very pleasurable.

Consequently, the same method(s) that Foucault argues liberate sexuality also liberate ethnicity through its sexualization. The agency lies deep within the audience of a given confession and the appreciation of this confession. One example would be a

⁷³ Ibid. p. 44-45.

Cherokee wearing a Cleveland Indians baseball hat that had the imagery of their mascot Wahoo. Certainly, the word "Indian" has itself been re-appropriated for use by Native Americans. This confession of symbols is linked to the identification of a common marker, much like the feeling of seeing an American flag while vacationing overseas. But more importantly, this process incorporates the retrieved ownership over cultural markers. This retrieved ownership allows for re-definition of that marker through the confession process. In other words, the confessor defines his own traits without the traits defining him. This, however, is keeping in mind that the authority figure hearing the confession must be an instrument of a pre-determined circulation of power.

I am by no means suggesting that American ethnicity, in particular Cherokee ethnicity, is as liberated as Foucault suggests of sexuality. I simply recognize symbolic confession as a means toward achieving liberation in the face of an authoritative determination of what it "means" to be Indian. Therefore, the narrative of Cherokee, North Carolina and its mis-appropriated Plains Indian imagery does not necessarily mean a rift in traditional values and economic survival. The economic tools, which have enabled Cherokees to grow financially are often the very ones that they employ to assert their identity. While most Cherokees would not don a dyed plastic headdress to proclaim their Indian Country citizenship, they might don feathered regalia for a powwow performance in which they mingle with various tribes as a sign of pan-Indian belonging. Is this not also "playing Indian?" In some regards it is. These performers act within certain framed roles. However, in cases such as dance and drum contests, creativity and personal style are rewarded.

When it comes to "traditional" displays of Cherokee culture, it may more depend on who and where displays of "indianness" occur than on the products and symbols involved. As I mentioned before, "traditional" is a state of mind. But as Foucault reminds us, such a confession can exhibit clear signs of power and authority.

Evoking the authority of "traditionalism" has often effected public debates in Cherokee. While Cherokees employ the term for political decisions, the media often force feed this rhetoric to the public when discussing Cherokee. One example of this is the debate over local bear zoos. Environmental activists have long opposed the bear zoos in Cherokee. Their resistance to caged animals is quite typical of many other American protests involving the mistreatment of animals. What makes this particular debate interesting is the dialog that between tribal members and "outsiders" in the late eighties, early nineties. On September 10th, 1989, *The Asheville Citizen-Times* newspaper covered a "Bear Rights Rally" in Cherokee.⁷⁴ Bob Scott, the reporter on scene, reported an encounter with Principal Chief Ed Taylor and the protestors. Taylor met the activists at a ranger station in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and informed them that, "their tactics were turning tribal council members off to the bear problem and the tribe does not want any outside interference." He was then quoted as saying, "Let us handle our own problems. You took our land. What else do you want? You can't tell us what to do. Our people don't want to be told what we have to do." The "you" that Taylor refers to can be interpreted as either non-Indians in general whom he hold responsible for the displacement of Indian peoples throughout American history. Or the "you" could refer to environmental "keepers" (noting that they met at the NPS ranger station) who

⁷⁴ Bob Scott, "Cherokee, Activists Deadlock: Bear Rights Rally Draws Indians Also," *Asheville Citizen-Times*, 10 September 1989, sec. A.

acquired Cherokee land for the initiation of the Great Smokey Mountains National Park a few decades earlier and essentially forced Cherokees into a tourism market that thrives off attractions such as bear zoos. Either way, Taylor made a significant distinction. Them and us. Indians and Whites.

The reporter then immediately reminds the reader, “but more than half of the people who showed up for the rally were Cherokee Indians who said they agree the bears should not be kept in cages.” So perhaps this debate was less about race/culture and more about right and wrong? One could only hope. In fact, the entrenched prejudices emerged with the next paragraph. Scott quotes a twenty-four year-old woman, whom he labels “a Cherokee” as saying, “When the great spirit put bears on earth, he didn’t put them in a cage. Indians feel a deep respect for all the animals. The bears are for the Cherokee, the buffalo for the Sioux. The bears are very sacred to our people. They are our spiritual brothers and sisters.” Scott’s informant is actually a bit misinformed about the relationship between bears and Cherokees. Unlike the Sioux with buffalo, Cherokees do not possess an oral tradition that claims to have originally been bears. Furthermore, traditionally hunters do not ask the “bear’s pardon” when he kills it.⁷⁵ Historical accuracy of bear/Cherokee relations is not the major concern of this statement.⁷⁶ It is not even the informant who has made the most interesting commentary on Cherokee culture. Scott, the reporter, has selected this quote for its “authenticity.” The non-Indian protestors can simply disagree with caged bears but Indians must provide a traditional narrative of harmony and earthly relationship if they are to receive a place in public media. Most importantly, they must remind the audience that if the Sioux do, so do we!

⁷⁵ James Mooney, *History, Myths and Sacred Formulas*, 250.

⁷⁶ In fact, one cannot deny that animals are held more sacred in Cherokee belief than in non-Indian societies.

Lest Cherokees doubt their natural rights, Scott presents yet another voice to remind the readers of distinct divisions between Cherokee and white manipulations of ecology. Quoting “a Cherokee who joined the protest” but who seems to be unsure of what side of the issue he falls on, Scott includes the following statement by a resident,

The whole tribe is getting blamed for what a few are doing. Most of the owners are white. It’s the responsibility of tribal leaders to put a stop to it. But people don’t have the right to come in here and tell us what to do.⁷⁷

This statement indicating that the owners of these tourist attractions are “mostly white” is a typical perception of tourism entrepreneurs by Cherokees not directly involved in the tourism industry. Non-culturally accurate tourism can easily be blamed on the lack of tribally enrolled business owners. Largely a misconception, this opinion allows for the belief that white intentions and white driven tourism has corrupted traditional Cherokee culture.⁷⁸ As this study will show, such a misinterpretation will illuminate tribal divisions and conflicts. These are the underlying narratives of Cherokee culture that most tourists are shielded from. Yet, they are essential in understanding Cherokee as a changing community that struggles to survive economically and culturally.

Roadside “Chiefting” in Cherokee is accessible to tourists, yet the debates surrounding it are not captured by the tourist’s Polaroid. “Chiefting” in Cherokee, though it has no physical impact on people, place or living being, has received even more attention than the bear parks. There are several roadside wooden or canvas teepees set up in front of gift shops in Cherokee that offer shelter to the roadside chiefs who offer their pictures for tips. Lawrence French and Jim Hornbuckle explain that,

⁷⁷ Bob Scott, “Cherokee Activists,” 3A.

⁷⁸ Most caged bears were owned by Cherokees throughout tourism’s history.

Phenotypical Indian males dress up in colorful Plains Indian garb, including the full-feathered bonnet of a war chief. Some Cherokees refer to these pseudo-chiefs as 'grasshopper chiefs' or 'postcard chiefs'. The former label reflects the fact that these chiefs come out in the spring and disappear in the winter much like a grasshopper. This is a full-time seasonal employment for about tow dozen Cherokee males, while dozens of others do it on a part-time basis. It is hard work since the 'chief' often has other obligations to the shop sponsoring him, such as janitorial services, and he is apt to work 12-hour days, seven days a week.⁷⁹

A legitimate tourist industry, "chiefing" is one of the most common agencies of interaction between tourists and Cherokee "locals." Tourists can leave with a picture of their children and "a real live Indian" and the "chief" can make a decent day's income. Roadside chiefs are the most obvious example of appropriated Plains Indian imagery for marketed use and therefore, their consistent interaction with seasonal tourists contributes greatly to Cherokee cultural misunderstandings. They are the Indians in teepees that are so highly sought and their image is essentially for sale.

The first "chiefs" begin working storefronts just as the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park opened, sending an insurgence of tourists to the area.⁸⁰ Probably the most famous and certainly "the most photographed" (self-described) Indian "chief" in Cherokee (or the world, as he claims) is Chief Henry. Chief Henry explained that store owners would hire "chiefs" to stand in front of their stores for about three dollars a day plus tips in order to attract visitors inside. When interviewed in

⁷⁹ Lawrence French & Jim Hornbuckle, ed., *The Cherokee Perspective* (Boone, NC: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1981), 36-37.

⁸⁰ Tom Jumper has been said to be the first "chief." Since the inception of the park system plan, "chiefing" has been listed as one of Cherokee's "Indian attractions" according to Lawrence French & Jim Hornbuckle, ed., *The Cherokee Perspective*, 37.

1981, Chief Henry explained that though some may not agree with his representation of Indian culture, he was ultimately a positive impact on the Cherokee community. He was a cultural ambassador of sorts, claiming that he poses for an estimated 43 million pictures a year and adorns a variety of postcards.⁸¹ This visual affirmation of Plains Indian culture in nearby Cherokee, North Carolina, continues to draw in crowds from all over southeastern United States.

But perhaps even more practical than this economic contribution, Chief Henry's answer to the question, "how does chiefting benefit the American Indians in general and the Cherokee Indian in particular," speaks to personal stability as an Indian person. He answers, "Well, if you know your job, you can benefit yourself. If you don't know your job, you can't."⁸² While Chief Henry's work may impact the identity of Cherokee peoples in the eyes of the greater United States, the world and Indian Country, he still considers himself an advocate for the conveyance of accurate Cherokee heritage. He agrees that most tourist come to Cherokee with false images of Indians and Cherokees in particular. Chief Henry estimates,

Ninety percent of the tourists who come here look for Indians who live in teepees and run around naked and hide between trees, ride horses. Very few people who come to Cherokee expect to find the Indians as they live today, and the only ones who do, have been here before and know what to expect. I think there should be a program set up, not by the Cherokee, probably by the federal government, teaching people overseas, foreign people, of how Indians live today. Not that they live in teepees and ride horses and act like savages. Ninety percent of them that come from

⁸¹ Obviously, Chief Henry has exaggerated his photo opportunities. If he posed for one picture every second all year, he would only have taken 27 million. Given he takes a few months off annually, 43 million is a stretch.

⁸² Lawrence French & Jim Hornbuckle, eds., *The Cherokee Perspective*, 79.

Germany think we live in teepees and that we'd scalp 'em
if they don't tip you. I believe that's so.⁸³

His vision for federal government international education programs seems at the very least industrious, yet it does point to a separation of the culturally aware self from the image one provides to the outside world. Chief Henry wants outsiders to know the reality of Cherokee culture but not at his own expense, not even the expense of his tribe. For the time being, Chief Henry can play the role of the Plains Indian Chief and leave cultural education to those who can afford to teach. His story provides startling evidence that cultural preservation, even pride one's community image, greatly depends on a supportive market. Of course, the inverse is also true. What might Chief Henry be doing if he was not a roadside chief? It is difficult for even he to know living in a Cherokee context where tourism provides the majority of employment opportunities and marketable imagery is so vital to that tourism.

Factionalism

Though Eastern Cherokees know their history devoid of teepees and totem poles, similar imagery has not only influenced Pan-Indian participation but has also entered their governmental practices, social culture and personal identity as it relates to the greater Indian Country. As John Finger describes, Cherokee, "tribal politics can be nasty, brutish, and frequently entertaining."⁸⁴

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 79.

⁸⁴ John Finger, *Cherokee Americans*, xiii.

Most recently, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) has pursued heated debates surrounding two tribally internal issues and one larger stance in Indian Country. Prior to the recent 2003 elections, the EBCI's tribal council was divided almost straight down the middle in decisions to purge the enrollment through DNA testing and to abolish of absentee voting.⁸⁵ Oddly enough, it was those council representatives and citizens that claimed to be “traditionalists” who approved DNA testing and the abolition of absentee voting. Like most of American Indian tribes, Cherokees have historically based membership on an acceptance of cultural practices and personal identity, not blood quantum. Cherokees have a strong history of adopting white settlers or Indians from other tribes into their culture, even naming them as tribal leaders.⁸⁶ DNA testing to determine bloodline, thus eliminating adoption-influenced lineages, seems undoubtedly opposed to traditional Cherokee belief systems that allow Cherokee identity to be culturally defined, not solely racially defined.

Similarly, stripping absentee voting rights from tribal members is intuitively opposed to preserving rights of democratic sovereignty. Recently, in a referendum vote, the Cherokee people voted to abolish absentee voting rights of anyone (enrolled members or otherwise) who are not serving military duty, official tribal business or enrolled in an academic institution. Therefore, an enrolled member living in Georgia could still vote in tribal elections, but would be required to spend their own time and money to drive to North Carolina on the day of the election. Those in favor of the decision recognized the

⁸⁵ This ruling allows for absentee votes to be mailed in only by enrolled members who are serving in the military, away on official duty or enrolled in an academic institution. Any tribal member can vote in person, but at his or her personal travel expense. For example, a tribal member working in Florida can only vote if he or she drives to Cherokee on Election Day and casts the vote by hand.

⁸⁶ Will Thomas was a white man adopted into the Cherokee tribe and became responsible for holding the Eastern Band's land until it could be put into federal trust.

reservation borders as a marker for Cherokee citizenship. Though the Cherokee have traditionally lived throughout the southeast, treaties with the United States have severely limited the Cherokee territory and in the case of the Trail of Tears, divided the nation. Now the Eastern Band continues the process of reservationization through its own legal procedures.⁸⁷

The issues tied to this political dispute have effected, if not shaped, the way many Cherokees dress, what commodities they purchase and display as well as a re-assessment of culturally Indian identity markers. Cherokee peoples are increasing aware of the phenotypic traits associated with their identity. In their role in Indian Country, the Cherokee have a significant history of not supporting the Lumbee Tribe's federal recognition. Federal recognition is vital to the economic stability of a tribal entity as well as its recognition as a nation with, at the very least, access to sovereignty claims. With federal recognition, Indian tribes can apply for federal funding through the BIA and gain access to many services. The sheer numbers of the Lumbee tribe who would have access to these services during a time of BIA budget malfunctions and decreased federal funding, certainly escalates fears that Lumbee recognition would be yet another blow to Indian Country. This, of course, assumes that Lumbees have no rightful claim, themselves, to Indian Country.

For some Cherokees, the mixed heritage of Lumbees, with a large African American influence, has re-ignited fears of Indian racial muting. It is quite possible that many Cherokees fear that the Lumbees, a North Carolina neighbor, will further Indian

⁸⁷ Reservationization is a term I first used in 2003 in an unpublished work for Yale University, "Cultural Consumption," to describe the process of becoming financially and sociological impacts of reservation life on Native Americans.

Country stereotypes of non-Native natives on the east coast.⁸⁸ The perception is a racial claim to "Indianness" rather than a cultural one. Yet, these perceptions are still prevalent in Indian Country.

Questions surrounding Lumbee origin complicate authenticity debates. While the opposition to Lumbee federal recognition lies more on racially and economically motivated personal comments, it is a reminder that the Cherokee are concerned with the acceptable image of the American Indian even if it has been imbued with marketed imagery. Through a rejection of Lumbee recognition, many Cherokees assert a symbolic connection to established conceptions of "Indianess." It seems that North Carolina has room for only one commercial Indian entity. With the Lumbee's close access to I-95, the potential for tourism diversion is a very real threat for the Eastern Band, though the dilution of federal aid provides a greater concern. In this issue, we can see that the economic system established by federal authorities for the "survival" of Cherokee people, directly effects Cherokee actions in Indian Country.⁸⁹ For the purpose of this study, it is not necessary to argue either against or for Lumbee federal recognition. The dialogue evoked by such a controversy, however, greatly enlightens identity structuring.

These political issues are complicated by the absence of a constitution. This absence, however, speaks to why the Cherokees are often divided. And it is here where we can see the real influences of tourism economics on Cherokee's identity. In August of 1935 Cherokee held tribal elections and included a new constitution under the Indian Reorganization Act on its ballot agenda. Just prior to the vote, tribal agent Fred Bauer

⁸⁸ It should also be noted that blatant racism, in this case Indian against African American, does exist on the Qualla Boundary but it is complicated by the tribe's history of assimilation and varied opinions and ideological beliefs of Cherokee people.

⁸⁹ In effort to protect Cherokee cultural pride, the reality of another area tribe, having no pre-contact existence, at least theoretically insults the historical resistance and survival of the Cherokee people.

and the American Indian Federation fought the IRA by claiming it promoted communism, America's greatest enemy of free enterprise.⁹⁰ This appears to be one of the most significant historical events for Cherokee that has disrupted any solid definition of traditionalism; this pitted cultural values against business expansion, and there the debate has remained. The Eastern Band has since never been able to adopt a constitution and to this day operates off an amended 1889 state charter.

In 1984, just as Cherokee sorted through disappointment from the World's Fair's failure to generate tourism, a new proposed tribal constitution surfaced and sparked fierce political debates. A longtime business owner approached a grand council to promote the constitution as an entrepreneurial and progressive step in Cherokee economic stability. Instead, the proposal was met with a factional desire to restrict tribal enrollment to a blood quantum level of one-half Cherokee. With sixty-two percent of tribal members falling below this level, the constitution was ultimately rejected, yet left racial wounds still felt today.⁹¹

With several political debates tabled in Cherokee, it seems inevitable that the symbolic ethnicity discussed by Gans and the confessional empowerment described by Foucault emerges in the community. Only a few years ago "AI" license tags began emerging in North Carolina. Accompanying the license tag number is a feathered pan-Indian symbol and the letters AI, standing for American Indian. While these are still North Carolina tags, they mark Native American drivers. The tags proliferated Cherokee. The assumption is that one can drive anywhere in the United States and recognize someone from Cherokee, North Carolina. But the reality of this distinction is much

⁹⁰ John Finger, *Cherokee Americans*, 89.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 173. In 1986 the State Charter was amended to overturn the requirement for the chief and vice chief to have at least one-half Cherokee blood quantum level.

different. The "AI" tags are sponsored by the Lumbee Tribe. Revenues go into a fund to support their recognition process. Thus, those Cherokees eager to support their cultural identity and safeguard it for its unique characteristics are in turn supporting their adversary in Indian Country.

A Cherokee identity both struggles with and welcomes the products of an American tourism market. While early on tourism led Cherokees to question their own identity in the shadow of American citizenship, it has adjusted to question a Cherokee identity within a tribal community and that of Indian Country.

CONCLUSION

In 2003, Cherokee proclaimed its dedication to economic development, an agenda often regarded as a “progressive.” Michell Hicks, a licensed accountant and eight-year veteran in the office of tribal finance, was elected Principal Chief of the Eastern Band. His opposition ran a campaign targeting the “traditional” Cherokee people. He even went so far as to include his father (a former traditionalist chief) on campaign posters beseeching voters to remember their history. The political race was extremely close and typified Cherokee identity debates. In the end, the face for Cherokee was young (38 years of age in Hicks’ case), formally educated, and dedicated to economic progress.

Chief Hicks explains this new national positioning of Cherokee as a continued calling. Hicks response to questions of Cherokee’s public role is,

Within the state the tribe has become the economic engine for western North Carolina.... we are a major draw to the southeast. Our casino is the most visited attraction in the state of North Carolina. And in Indian Country, I believe the Eastern Band has always been progressive in our thinking, progressive in the things we are trying to accomplish. I feel that we continue to be leaders in Indian Country... One shortfall that we have is in regard to population, we live in a rural environment... these retailers are looking for a large mass... that’s something we have to do a better job planning... to bring folks here.⁹²

In this statement, Chief Hicks illuminates Cherokee’s drive for economic progress and the need for state and federal comparative markers. Cherokee needs not only to achieve

⁹² Chief Michell Hicks, interview by Annette Saunooke, 27 November 2003.

economic stability, but also to excel within the state and set an exemplary standard in Indian Country. As the federal government steps back from tribal operations or in Chief Hick's own words,

The federal government has an expectation that the tribe should step up and address some of the issues that face us and then the feds will help where they can... that increase is mainly from construction progress... such as the highway 19 project...it has allowed this tribe to stay closer to our friends in D.C. We have become, so to speak, a political player at that level,⁹³

Cherokee has chosen to embrace economic development, in particular tourism as a defining characteristic of its people and culture. The narrative of Cherokee is one that its people hope to share. Chief Hicks believes "that Cherokee is providing an image that shows us being progressive, being willing to step up and partner with local communities and basically to fuel the growth of western North Carolina. Unemployment has declined and that shows what Cherokee is willing to do for our area." The main obstacle for Cherokee will be overcoming its own political division as it aspires to "become a political player at (the federal) level." There remains a consistent fear that an economically driven community may lose its "traditional" culture, deplete its cultural resources through tourism sales. Even Chief Hicks, with a strong economic/accounting background, reminds his public,

There is one thing that this tribe can never forget, where we came from. The cultural aspects, our heritage. One thing I don't want to see this tribe become.... is a gaming tribe. I want Cherokees to be known for our rich history, our culture. It just describes the people we really are. To be a

⁹³ Ibid.

member of the Eastern Band, there is a great pride that comes along with that. You know your heritage you know your culture. Most Cherokees will take great pride in knowing where we have been and where we are going. Especially taking into consideration the grief we have experienced in the past.⁹⁴

In a Duboisian manner, the Cherokee citizen must choose an image to portray both at home and away. This varies drastically from person to person and is highly dependent on where the enrolled member lives, works and where he or she travels. In essence, if we look at the imagery surrounding the Cherokee community in the past six decades, Cherokee has swiftly moved from a stronghold of Cherokee tradition, to a pan-Indian participant, to metropolitan savvy businessmen and women. Because of its access to the American public, Cherokee has a responsibility (forced on and assumed) to portray an independent culture that preserves its traditional ways in the face of intense economic assimilation efforts. In doing so, it must also be welcoming of those agents of assimilation, even survive off of them. Tourism is simply the structure in which all of this evolves.

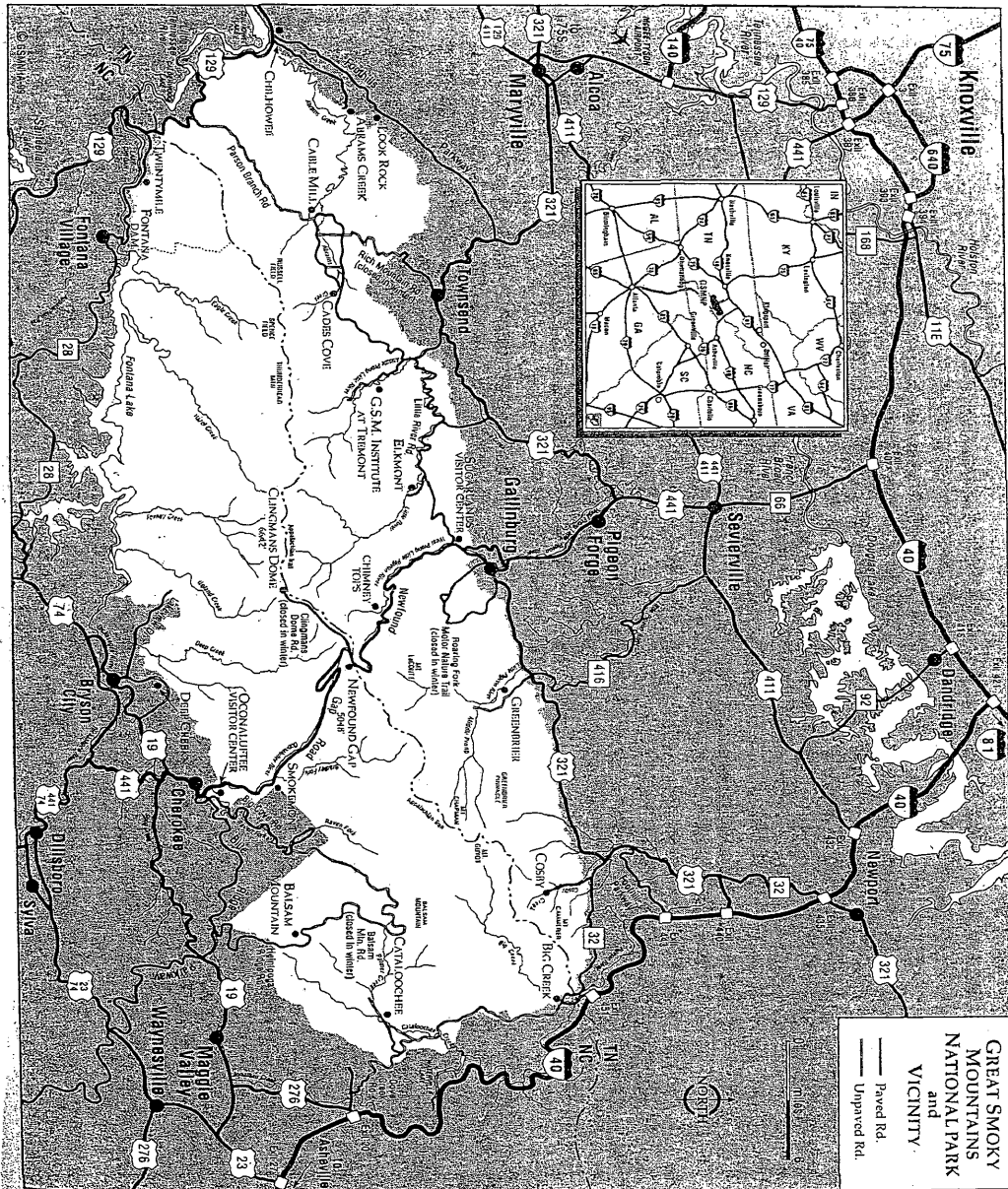
Cherokee tourism is both adaptive but also very much a resistance mode. The imagery associated with such an enterprise may not be “traditionally” founded, but it does allow Cherokees to operate within a support system of Indian Country while claiming private touchstones of Cherokee culture for itself, not to be mass-produced for public consumption. I have been asked, “Why do so many Americans have great-grandmothers who were Cherokee Indian princesses?” I cannot fully answer this *royal* question. Instead, I will do a very “traditional” thing and allow the Chief to have the final words:

⁹⁴ Ibid.

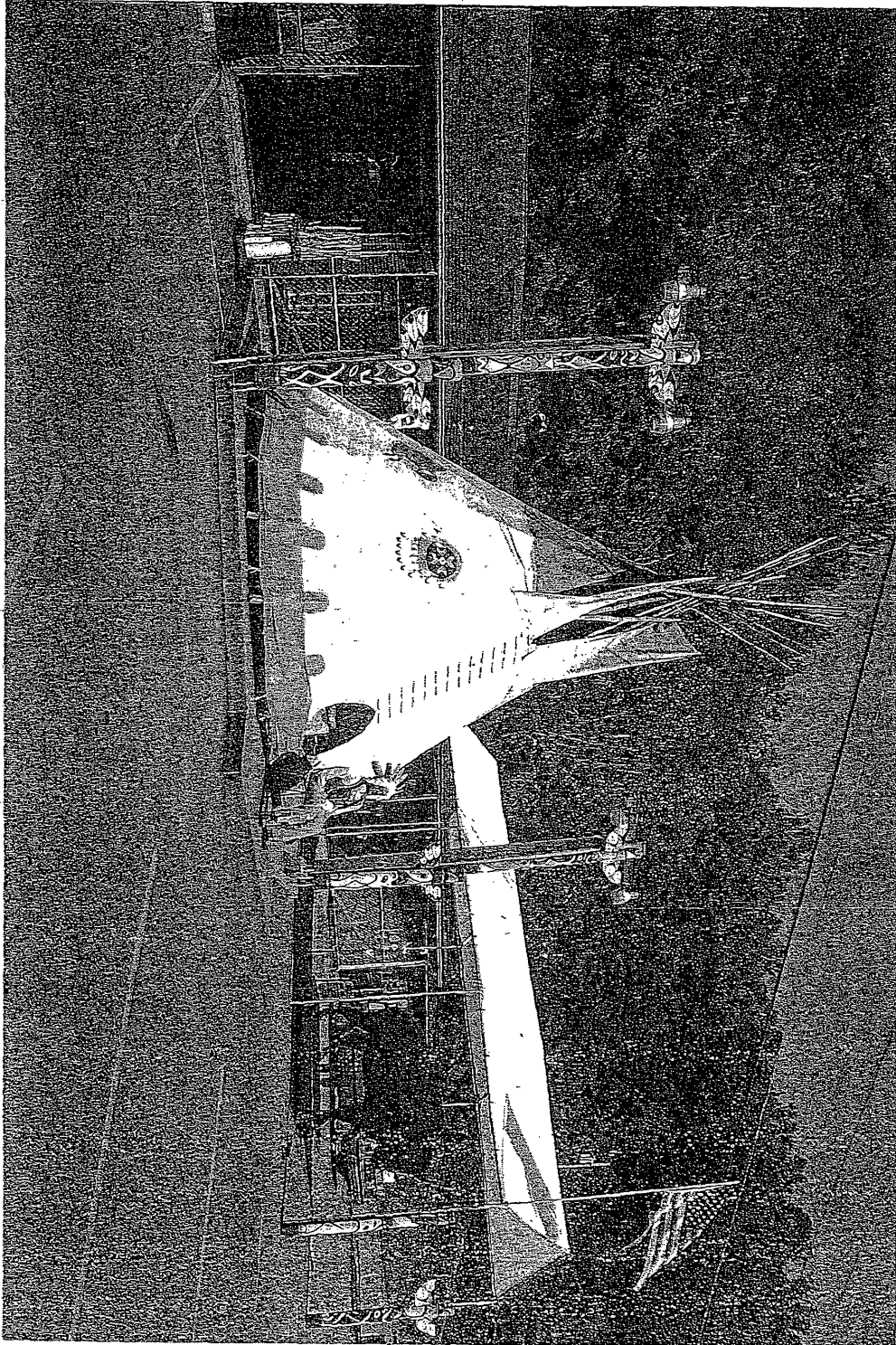
I think with being one of the Five Civilized Tribes... basically anybody who knows anything about Native Americans knows that Cherokee is a tribe. The recognition of many other tribes is not as prevalent. Cherokees were always progressives with making friendships with outsiders. Cherokees were always willing to trade with those folks... Even though we have gone through a lot of bad times. History is history. I think we will always be progressive in our relationships with the outside community.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Hicks interview, 2003.

APPENDIX A



APPENDIX B



Shop front, Cherokee town, North Carolina. The mélange of imagery used by the retail outlets, hotels and restaurants in Cherokee may appeal to the tourists, but they reflect nothing of Cherokee culture.

Source: Photo by M. Simpson, 1995

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